

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 00725 01 OF 03 191108Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 171316Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6109
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KIGALI 725

DEPT PASS AID, ICA, PC

NAIROBI FOR REDSO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, EAID, ELON,SPOP, RW
SUBJECT: TRENDS IN RWANDA - APRIL 1978: PROGRESS ON DEMOGRAPHIC
FRONT

1. SUMMARY: GOR OFFICIALS CAME TO GRIPS WITH RWANDA'S
SENSITIVE CRITICAL DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS IN APRIL. SCIENTIFIC
COUNCIL FOR SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS -- GOR'S DELIBERATING
BODAY FOR DEMOGRAPHIC MATTERS -- CONSIDERED REPORTS
ON MELBOURNE CONFERENCE ON BILLINGS BIRTH CONTROL METHOD
AND ON FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA.
COUNCIL ALSO READ REPORT ON EMIGRATION POSSIBILITIES FOR
RWANDANS IN TANZANIA, AND MADE NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

EVOLVING GOR ATTITUDE IN FAVOR OF FAMILY PLANNING DUE
PARTLY TO CATHOLIC CHURCH'S ADVOCACY OF BILLINGS METHOD
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PAGE 02 KIGALI 00725 01 OF 03 191108Z

AND TO VERY EFFECTIVE PROMOTION BY PATHFINDER FUND REPS.
EMBASSY, WHICH HAS DISCREETLY BUT PERSISTENTLY ENCOURAGED
GOR TO ADOPT EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM, ANTICIPATES
GOR REQUESTS FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE IN THIS FIELD. END
SUMMARY.

2. RWANDA ORGANIZES RESPONSE TO DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS:

IN LANDMARK EVENT, SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MET 18-19 APRIL TO COMPARE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO RWANDA'S DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS. ACCORDING TO EXTENSIVE PRESS/RADIO COVERAGE, COUNCIL HEARD REPORT BY SEVEN-MEMBER RWANDAN DELEGATION TO FEBRUARY 10-MARCH 3 CONFERENCE ON BILLINGS BIRTH CONTROL METHOD AT MELBOURNE (AIRFARE FOR FIVE DELEGATES WAS PAID THROUGH USAID-SPECIAL POPULATION ACTIVITIES FUNDS), AND THEN DISCUSSED REPORT OF ANOTHER DELEGATION RETURNING FROM VISIT OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS IN KENYA, MAURITIUS, AND TUNISIA FEBRUARY 4-MARCH 11 (ORGANIZED BY PATHFINDER WITH US FUNDING). COUNCIL ALSO CONSIDERED REPORT BY ATHANASE GATANARI, DIRGEN BILATERAL AFFAIRS AT FONMIN, ON POSSIBILITIES OF LARGE SCALE EMIGRATION TO TANZANIA.

FOLLOWING DELIBERATION, THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDED THAT GOR:

- CONSIDER EMIGRATION PROGRAM TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUAL WELFARE.
- MAKE EVERY SECTOR OF POPULATION AWARE OF ALL FAMILY PLANNING METHODS.
- DESIGN NATIONAL FP PROGRAM UNDER INDEPENDENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY.
- TRAIN MOTIVATED PERSONNEL TO START FP PILOT PROGRAMS IN EXISTING HEALTH CENTER.

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PAGE 03 KIGALI 00725 01 OF 03 191108Z

3. ONE SOLUTION UNDER CONSIDERATION: EMIGRATION

ONE WAY TO REDUCE THE DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES IN LAND-SCARCE RWANDA IS THROUGH EMIGRATION. IN HIS REPORT TO THE COUNCIL, GATANAZI (WHO HAS MADE SEVERAL HISTORICAL STUDIES ON RWANDAN EMIGRATION) NOTED THAT TANZANIA IS WILLING TO ACCEPT 400,000-1,000,000 RWANDAN IMMIGRANTS ON PRE-SELECTED SITES (NOT PARTICULARLY WELL-SUITED FOR HUMAN HABITATION). FONMIN NSEKALIJE NOTED IN AN APRIL 4 PRESS INTERVIEW THAT "RWANDANS WILL RESPOND WARMLY TO THE CALL FOR IMMIGRANTS." HOWEVER, HE IMMEDIATELY ADDED THAT "ANY EMIGRATION PROGRAM MUST BE CAREFULLY PREPARED AND, FOR THE TIME BEING, GOVERNMENTS MIGHT HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL (RWANDAN) MENTALITIES CHANGE."

NSEKALIJE'S CAVEAT REFLECTS SKEPTICISM IN AND OUT OF GOR ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF LARGE SCALE EMIGRATION, GIVEN THE INHERENT CULTURAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 00725 02 OF 03 191129Z
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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 PC-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 KIGALI 725

FINANCIAL COSTS EMIGRATION PRESENTS. FURTHERMORE, A VERY LIMITED GOR/GOVERNMENT OF GABON-SPONSORED EMIGRATION PROGRAM TO GABON IN 1975-76 ENDED IN COMPLETE FAILURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, 188,500 RWANDANS EMIGRATED TO THE CONGO UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE BELGIAN COLONIAL AUTHORITIES 1949-1959. IN ANY CASE, THE COUNCIL LISTED "EMIGRATION BY FREE CHOICE OF RWANDANS" AS AN ALTERNATIVE WORTH PURSUING -- AS IT SURELY WILL BE DURING NYERERE VISIT IN MAY.

4. ANOTHER SOLUTION: INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION

JUST ONE YEAR AGO, GOR HELD THAT RWANDA'S POPULATION WORRIES AROSE FROM INSUFFICIENT FOOD PRODUCTION AND NOT FROM EXCESSIVELY HIGH BIRTH RATE. ALTHOUGH NOW ADMITTING IMPORTANCE OF BOTH FACTORS, GOR STILL LISTS INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION AS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY OF FIVE-YEAR PLAN 1977-81. GOR AND FOREIGN DONOR ATTENTION IS AIMED ESPECIALLY AT MORE RATIONAL USE OF FARMLAND, DEVELOPING FARM COOPERATIVES, AND ENCOURAGING FARMERS TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KIGALI 00725 02 OF 03 191129Z

TECHNIQUES AND VARY CROPPING PATTERNS; E.G., LIMITED AMOUNT

OF LAND DEVOTED TO BANANAS (CHIEFLY USED FOR BEER PRODUCTION) IN FAVOR OF MORE NUTRITIOUS CROPS. USDAID THROUGH FOOD MARKETING AND STORAGE PROJECT AND THROUGH FINANCING SILOS CONSTRUCTED BY CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES IS LEADING CONTRIBUTOR TO SOLVING FOOD SPOILAGE PROBLEM (SOMETIMES AMOUNTING TO 25 PERCENT TOTAL GRAIN CROP).

5. FACING FACTS: FAMILY PLANNING ESSENTIAL

EVEN WITH SUCCESSFUL MODERNIZATION OF RWANDAN AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES -- A DIFFICULT AND COSTLY PROPOSITION AT BEST -- IN THE ABSENCE OF AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM RWANDA'S DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. IN 1977 STUDY, WORLD BANK CONCLUDED THAT RWANDA MUST INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION YEARLY BY A MINIMUM OF 3 PERCENT JUST TO KEEP UP WITH POPULATION GROWTH -- A TARGET NOT LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED, GIVEN FACT THAT ALMOST ALL ARABLE LAND IS NOW IN PRODUCTION.

ONE SIGNIFICANT FACTOR THAT HAS PROMPTED GOR TO FACE DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEM MORE SQUARELY HAS BEEN PAPAL NUNCIO'S QUIET EFFORTS WITH PRESIDENT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AND CATHOLIC LEADERS TO PROMOTE THE CHURCH-APPROVED BILLINGS METHOD. WITH CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES' SUPPORT, THE CONCEPT OF DELIBERATELY LIMITING BIRTHS HAS GAINED POLITICAL ACCEPTABILITY. GOR DELEGATION TO MELBOURNE RETURNED WITH GLOWING REPORT ON BILLINGS. POLISH DOCTOR-PRIEST OPERATING HEALTH CENTER ON OUTSKIRTS OF KIGALI, WHO ATTENDED MELBOURNE CONFERENCE, HAS BEGUN INSTRUCTIN STAFF ON BILLINGS METHOD AND PLANS EXTENSIVE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN. NUNCIO PLANS TO ASK US FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT THAT ACTIVITY.

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PAGE 03 KIGALI 00725 02 OF 03 191129Z

WHILE NUNCIO AND CHURCH PROMOTE "NATURAL" METHOD, PATHFINDER FUND HAS BECOME A CATALYST FOR INTRODUCING OTHER BIRTH CONTROL METHODS IN RWANDA. DURING VISIT, PATHFINDER REGIONAL REP COLLABORATED CLOSELY WITH MADAME GAUDENCE NYIRASAFARI HABIMANA, SEC GEN MINSOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CHAIRPERSON OF SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL. HABIMANA RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO HIS SUGGESTION TO ESTABLISH FP BUREAU IN PRESIDENCY WHERE IT WILL HAVE FREEDOM OF ACTION ACROSS MINISTERIAL LINES. GOR OFFICIALS ACCEPTED PROPOSAL TO HAVE PATHFINDER CO-SPONSOR WITH GOR A ONE-WEEK SEMINAR IN RWANDA ON MATERNAL/CHILD HEALTH/FP THIS SUMMER. SEMINAR IS PLANNED FOR APPROXIMATELY 75 PARTICIPANTS FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES, ANGLOPHONE AS WELL AS FRANCOPHONE, WITH NO PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS BIAS.

GOR IS NOT YET READY TO ADOPT ACTIVE POPULATION POLICY.
AS COUNCIL FOR SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS
OBSERVED: "NO ONE METHOD HAS UNDERGONE INTENSIVE
EXPERIMENTATION IN RWANDA, AND NO ONE
METHOD CAN SATISFY ALL FAMILIES." FURTHERMORE,
POTENTIAL POCKETS OF RESISTANCE HAVE YET TO MOBILIZE
THEMSELVES. ONE EXAMPLE: MEETING SCHEDULED MAY 6 AT
UNIVERSITY TO DISCUSS CONTRACEPTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS
DREW LARGE AUDIENCE, BUT SPEAKERS MYSTERIOUSLY FAILED TO
APPEAR, AND CROWD FINALLY GAVE UP WAITING. STILL, THE
COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTING A CHANGE IN
ATTITUDE UNIMAGINED ONLY ONE YEAR AGO, ARE A SIGN THAT GOR IS
GETTING PREPARED TO DEAL SERIOUSLY WITH ITS DEMOGRAPHIC
CRISIS.

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 00725 03 OF 03 200015Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 3 OF 3 KIGALI 725

6. GAUDENCE NYIRASAFARI HABIMANA - KEY FIGURE IN RWANDAN
FAMILY PLANNING:

HABIMANA IS RWANDA'S HIGHEST RANKING WOMAN CIVIL SERVANT
AND ONE OF ONLY TWO WOMEN ON CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF MRND.
BORN IN GISENYI PREFECTURE IN 1943, SHE RECEIVED
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN RWANDA AND UNIVERSITY
DEGREE IN BELGIUM IN FAMILY SOCIOLOGY. IN 1975 SHE
VISITED US AS RWANDA'S DELEGATE TO THE PREPARATORY CONFERENCE
ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR AND LATER ATTENDED

THE IWY CONFERENCE IN MEXICO CITY.

BEFORE HER APPOINTMENT AS SOCIAL AFFAIRS SEC GEN IN JUNE 1975, HABIMANA SERVED AS DIR GEN FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS AT THE PRESIDENCY. SHE WAS NAMED TO MRND CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN 1976.

HABIMANA IS WIDELY RESPECTED BOTH INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT AND OUT AS BEING A COMPETENT INDIVIDUAL WHO CARRIES THROUGH ON HER PROMISES. AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL ON SOCIO-
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PAGE 02 KIGALI 00725 03 OF 03 200015Z

DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS, SHE WIELDS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE AND HAS DIRECT ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT.

7. PERSPECTIVE ON FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF POPULATION POLICY, AND THE USG ROLE:

USG, NOT AMONG LARGEST DONORS OVERALL TO RWANDAN DEVELOPMENT, NEVERTHELESS HAS PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN TACKLING FOOD/POPULATION PROBLEM. USAID FOOD STORAGE AND MARKETING PROJECT SEEKS TO REDUCE CROP LOSSES, IMPROVE INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, AND STABILIZE PRICES OF KEY BEAN AND SORGHUM CROPS TO STIMULATE GREATER PRODUCTION. OTHER STORAGE, PRODUCTION, AND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROJECTS FOR USAID FINANCING ARE BEING DEVELOPED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN COMING YEARS. PEACE CORPS ALSO MOVING INTO THIS AREA, BEGINNING WITH FISH CULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.

USG HAS MADE CLEAR THAT IT IS PREPARED TO SUPPORT RAPID PROGRESS TOWARD POSITIVE RWANDAN POLICY TO SLOW POPULATION GROWTH. ENCOURAGEMENT TO DATE HAS BEEN OPEN BUT DISCREET, AWAITING GREATER RWANDAN ACCEPTANCE OF NEED TO MOVE WITH GREATER URGENCY.

NOTWITHSTANDING RAPID PROGRESS MADE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS, REAL TEST WILL COME AS GOR FORMULATES A NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY. GOR OFFICIALS WILL BE FORCED TO TAKE POSITIONS - AND IN THE PROCESS EXAMINE THEIR PERSONAL CONVICTIONS ON FAMILY PLANNING. THE USG SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SMOOTH THIS PROCESS WHERE POSSIBLE BY BEING FLEXIBLE AND RECEPTIVE TO GOR ASSISTANCE NEEDS IN THE RURAL HEALTH/FAMILY PLANNING AREA.

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PAGE 03 KIGALI 00725 03 OF 03 200015Z

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